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HATFIELD AND LEVIN RELEASE EAST TIMOR LETTER

Senator Mark O. Hatfield (R-OR) and Senator Carl Levin (D-MI) today released a letter to Secretary of State George Shultz asking him to express concern over human rights violations in East Timor during his upcoming trip to the Association of Southeast Asian Nations Conference. 21 other Senators signed the letter.

Among the human rights issues raised in the letter were continuing reports of political prisoner detention and torture, intimidation of the Roman Catholics, and restricted access for international relief agencies. The letter is similar to one sent by Levin, Hatfield, and 20 other Senators in 1984 which convinced Secretary Shultz to raise the ongoing concern over the plight of the East Timorese.

"The relationship between the United States and Indonesia is a special one. Our ties can only be strengthened by honest discussion of these problems," said Hatfield. "The problems faced by the East Timorese must not be overshadowed by talk of military bases and geopolitical strategies," he said.

"While the US should continue to encourage an equitable resolution of the armed conflict in East Timor that has been going on since 1975, there are immediate problems faced by the East Timorese which demand prompt attention," Levin said.

The letter to Secretary Shultz is attached.

CONTACTS:

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United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

April 23, 1986

The Honorable George P. Shultz
Secretary of State
United States Department of State

Dear Mr. Secretary:

We commend you for publicly expressing United States concern for human rights in East Timor during your April, 1984 visit to Indonesia. Since that visit, British Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher and Pope John Paul II, among others, have expressed a similar concern to President Soeharto. The repeated raising of the issue by world leaders has led to some improvement of the human rights situation in East Timor, but a number of serious problems remain.

As you know, violence and repression have plagued East Timor since the 1975 Indonesian invasion of the island. The United States should continue to encourage an equitable and peaceful resolution to the ongoing armed conflict in East Timor. The immediate problems faced by the East Timorese, however, also demand attention. Specifically:

1. While public pressure has led to the release of some political prisoners, Amnesty International reports that many of those said by the government to have been released have in reality been transferred to secret detention camps. International humanitarian organizations do not have access to these "resettlement centers" because the Indonesian government does not acknowledge their existence. Since these political prisoners are isolated from world attention, the Indonesian government need not abide by international standards governing the treatment of prisoners. Many reports of torture in these "resettlement centers" have been received by Amnesty International.

2. The occupying Indonesian forces reportedly continue to intimidate both clergy and church members of East Timor's Roman Catholic Church. For the predominantly Roman Catholic East Timorese, such pressure only increases the tension between themselves and the Indonesians.

3. Though the famine in East Timor has ended, malnutrition and related health problems still exist in some areas. A lack of cooperation between Indonesian authorities and international relief agencies could spell disaster for the East Timorese.

4. When Portugal granted East Timor its independence in 1975, many families were separated. Those East Timorese still waiting to join their relatives in Portugal have suffered from unnecessarily slow action by Indonesian officials. Resolution of these family reunification cases would be an important humanitarian gesture by Indonesia.

We respectfully urge you to raise these concerns with the Indonesian government during your upcoming visit to the annual ASEAN meeting. We recognize the value of the relationship between Indonesia and the United States. Our friendship with Indonesia can only be strengthened by forthright discussion of the ongoing problems faced by the people of East Timor.

Thank you for your attention to this important issue.

Sincerely,

Chuck Grassley

Paul S. Laxalt

John Tower

Albert Gore Jr.

Clair Pell

Patrick Leahy

Alan Cranston

John Glenn

Alan Bryan

Edward Zorinsky

Mark Hatfield

Max Baucus

Jesse Helms

Senators Signing Hatfield-Levin Letter

Bill Bradley (D-NJ)
Quentin Burdick (D_ND)
John Chafee (R-RI)
Alfonse D'Amato (R-NY)
Daniel Patrick Moynihan (D-NY)
Orin Hatch (R-UT)
John Kerry (D-MA)
George Mitchell (D-MAINE)
Christopher Dodd (D-CT)
William Proxmire (D-WI)
Charles Grassley (R-IW)
John Heinz (R-PA)
Don Reigle (D-MI)
Tom Harkin (D-IW)
Edward Zorinsky (D-NB)
Paul Simon (D-ILL)
Patrick Leahy (D-VT)
Paul Sarbanes (D-MD)
Albert Gore (D-TN)
Claiborne Pell (D-RI)
Alan Cranston (D-CA)